



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 6 January 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
6 JANUARY 1968

1. North Vietnam

Two camouflaged sites on the coast south of Thanh Hoa appear to be for coastal defense missiles. What looks like the tail of one missile is visible in 19 December low-altitude photography. Preliminary examination of the photography suggests the missile involved is the SS-N-2, a naval cruise missile designed by the Soviets for use aboard missile patrol boats. The missile has a range of about 20 miles and flies just under sonic speed.

Each of the sites has six revetted positions and what appear to be launch rails can be seen in some of the revetments.

Current and past photography of the coast is being searched for additional evidence.

2. Dominican Republic

Dominican Communists are planning to stir up trouble around the University of Santo Domingo next week. The Communists hope to provoke the government into closing the university, which would give them a pretext for nationwide agitation. In recent months Dominican security forces have been doing fairly well in handling such demonstrations, but there is always the danger that the police will overreact.

3. Yemen

Claiming (mistakenly) that royalist military success is due to help from foreign mercenaries, the republicans want to invoke their joint defense pact with Egypt. Nasir has just extracted his troops from the Yemen mess and we doubt he will be interested in getting embroiled again.

4. Communist China

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5. United Kingdom

There now seems little doubt that the British are going to accelerate their withdrawal from Southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf. A senior Ministry of Defense official told the US Embassy that the Ministry was trying to hold at mid-1972 for both areas, but that there was strong pressure to get out by 1971.

The official also noted that the F-111 contract was under fire from Chancellor of the Exchequer Jenkins who has disliked the aircraft since his days as aviation minister. Healey is working on a possible fall-back which would reduce the order from 50 to 35 planes.

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6. Czechoslovakia

Novotny is out as head of the Czechoslovak party, although he apparently remains president of the republic. The much-criticized Novotny was replaced by Alexander Dubcek, who has been chief of the Slovak branch of the party since 1963.

We expect further changes; there is a good probability that a new regime will emerge representing a coalition of the moderate and reform factions which brought Novotny down. It remains to be seen how well a new leadership team can cope with Czechoslovakia's myriad social and economic problems.

Dubcek is something of an unknown quantity. The Slovaks are a minority group and no Slovak has ever held the top party job in Czechoslovakia. We note however, that Slovak leaders have been in the vanguard of the opposition to Novotny.

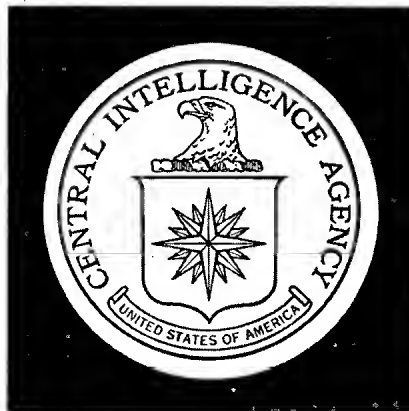
The full outlines of what is taking place in Prague are far from clear. At the moment, we do not anticipate any basic shifts in Czech relations with Moscow, but there may be some moderation in attitudes toward the West--Germany in particular.

7. Israel

Tension along the Israeli-Jordanian border is rising again. There have been three fire fights this week. The Israelis appear to be starting these incidents in retaliation for Arab terrorist activities.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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Communist Commentary on Trinh Statement and Rusk's Press Conference: Communist propaganda is still treading warily in treating Trinh's statement and Secretary Rusk's comments on it. The Soviet and Hungarian press have reported both statements straight with little comment. Most of the other Communist countries have been silent so far.

Only the Czechs have claimed that the US has rejected the North Vietnamese offer to hold talks. A 5 January Prague broadcast alleged that the US reacted to Trinh's statement in a "completely negative fashion." It charged that the "US is demanding an assurance from Hanoi that the other side would not use the cessation of bombing to improve its military position." While acknowledging that Secretary Rusk used "a cautious formulation to give the appearance of not fully rejecting the offer," the Czechs complained that he did not say how long the US wants to investigate the proposal for opening talks.

For the most part, the Communists appear to be biding their time and waiting for a cue from Hanoi before issuing any authoritative comment.

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No Date Yet for Opening of Liberation Front Press Office in Paris: The Liberation Front representative in North Vietnam, who has been in Paris for the past two weeks, has again claimed that the Front will establish a press office there "in a few months." No precise date for the opening was given nor were the individuals to staff it named.

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Ho in Unusual Spurt of Public Appearances: Within the past two weeks Ho Chi Minh has made four separate public appearances. During this time he

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has addressed an anniversary meeting, attended a Council of Ministers meeting and met with a visiting [] delegation []

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[] During the preceding ten months, the 77-year-old Ho had been almost completely out of the public picture; there were persistent reports that he was ill and out of Hanoi.

His current high visibility strongly suggests that the regime is taking advantage of a period when Ho is in Hanoi and in apparent good health to discredit earlier reports of his illness. In referring to his appearance at the 25 December anniversary meeting, the Hanoi press claimed Ho looked "strong and healthy."

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report.

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